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## EVENTS OF THE DAY

IN CHARGE OF

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THE WAR. The War passed from 1916 to 1917 in a maze of politics and peace-proposals. Roumania had collapsed, swiftly shattered by the Central Powers to a condition akin to Belgium, Serbia, and Poland; Allied diplomacy to master Greece had blundered; the Anglo-French offensive at the Somme to break through the German lines, like the terrible German offensive at Verdun, had come to a deadlock; the destruction of Allied shipping by German U-boats had increased portentously. The harassed Allies resorted to drastic changes of government and military leaders; the Central Powers grasped this auspicious moment for a peace-proposal. England chose Lloyd George, the man who had risen to every emergency and "done things," as her premier, giving him almost despotic power. He organized a War Council of five picked men, which could act quickly and effectively. France organized a similar body but retained her remarkable premier, Aristide Briand. She retired General Joffre, the hero of France, but without loss of prestige, making him Marshal of France. His command in the field was given to General Nivelle, the savior of Verdun, a younger, fresher man. Russia also chose new leaders. The Central Powers, almost simultaneously, projected their peace-proposal at an important meeting of the German Reichstag. Through the agency of the United States, Spain, and Switzerland they sent identical notes to the Entente Allies urging a conference of all belligerents to discuss peace terms, though no specific terms were stated. Without comment the three neutral nations delivered the note as instructed. A storm of protest followed from the Allies. Lloyd George, their spokesman, said in the House of Commons, "complete restitution, full reparation and effectual guarantees" of security for the future "against the aggressions of Prussian military domination" were the "minimum conditions" even "of any discussion." Immediately following came another startling surprise, a note from President Wilson to all the warring nations, not proposing peace or mediation but asking each side, in the interest of all nations, to state in precise terms for what they were fighting and on what terms the war might be concluded. The Allies vehemently resented the insinuation of vague motives. Germany replied, reiterating her suggestion for a peace

conference. Our official reply from the Allies has not yet arrived. Scandinavia and Switzerland sent our Administration notes of sympathy. On December 31, the ten Entente Allies, collectively, officially, and scornfully rejected the German peace-proposal, calling it "pretended propositions of peace" and "less an offer of peace than a war maneuver." But there has been a suggestion of peace, the first rift in the black clouds of war.

PROHIBITION. Alcohol and venereal disease are the two great racial poisons. The first, after centuries of abuse, bids fair to be eliminated. During the last two years Russia, by order of the Czar, has abolished vodka, and beer and wines are forbidden in many Russian cities; England has passed restrictive measures against alcoholic drinking; France has just decided on total prohibition of distilled liquors. Canada already has prohibition in five provinces. Two years ago in our own country there were nine prohibition states. To-day there are twenty-five, and six more are half dry. At this session of Congress, the Sheppard bill, making the District of Columbia dry, will probably pass; but the most astonishing movement towards prohibition, beyond the hopes of its most eager friends, was the recent favorable report of the resolution for a constitutional amendment forbidding the manufacture and sale of liquor for beverage purposes in the United States, to the House of Representatives, with recommendation that it ought to pass and the request for a special rule to bring it to a vote at this session.

THE DANISH WEST INDIES. Much voting has taken place to decide the question of the transfer of the Danish West Indies to American ownership. On August 4, 1916, the preliminary treaty between the two countries was signed. It was shortly ratified by our Senate and the upper house of the Danish Parliament. A referendum vote of the Danish people, in which a large majority voted for the sale, resulted in a final ratification by the entire Danish Parliament. At the referendum, Danish women, under the new constitution, voted for the first time on a national issue. The people of the islands themselves voted by an overwhelming majority in favor of American annexation. It now remains for Congress to appropriate the purchase money of \$25,000,000 and to provide for the institution of an American territorial government. The population of 33,000, nine-tenths of whom are negroes, wish to be given American citizenship immediately on the transfer and to manage their own affairs under our Federal Government. A great demonstration of the Navy is being planned when the United States takes formal possession. Though commercially the three islands are of little value, their proximity to the Panama Canal makes our control of them a strategic necessity.